

## ***"How Can I Get More Out Of Bible Study?"***

Many people ask this very question. It comes from a sincere desire to read and understand the Bible - just as God intended - for God did not give us an unintelligible book. He knows we can understand His word, and He gave us that word to comprehend. However, the Bible is a book which must be "rightly divided" as Paul said to Timothy (2 Tim. 2:15). One must study the Bible in order to properly discern its teachings. Timothy was commanded to study and read the Scriptures (1 Tim. 4:13). The fact that he was so commanded means that it was possible for his study to be productive and useful. As Christians, Peter exhorts us to add knowledge to our faith (2 Pet. 1:5). If we achieve this knowledge, it will come through study of God's word. No one will be miraculously endowed with scriptural knowledge in our generation.

If Bible study is to be profitable to us, we must make the proper approach to Scripture. Bible reading is different than reading the newspaper or a novel. Following some of these guidelines for effective Bible reading and study will help you get more out of the time you spend with the Word of God.

- \* Read with reverence. The Bible is "inspired" of God. It did not originate with man. 2 Pet. 1:21 says that the Holy Spirit "moved" the men who wrote the Scriptures.

- \* Read with a sense of need. Realize that you need God's instruction and that He will provide it through His word. Man is incapable of directing his own steps (Jer. 10:23).

- \* Think while you are reading. How often have you read words but did not comprehend because you were not thinking about what you were reading? The Bible deserves meditation - deliberate thinking. Don't imagine that just reading the words of the Bible will help you. The upright man of Psalm 1:2 meditated on the law of God.

- \* Don't "read something into" the Bible. Let the Bible speak for itself. So many people make the mistake of reading the Bible with their minds already made up concerning what it has to say. We must not decide what we want to believe and then go to the Bible to try and prove it. The Scriptures are profitable for doctrine (teaching) according to 2 Tim. 3:16. Allow the Scriptures to formulate your beliefs.

- \* Determine to apply what you are reading. If you love God's truth, you must be governed by it. If you read the Scriptures but fail to do what you read, do not be surprised if soon your Scripture reading stops altogether. We must not only listen to the Scriptures, we must also obey them (Jas. 1:22). The Scriptures are not designed to be ignored.

Why not give these suggestions a try and see if your personal Bible study doesn't improve?

***- by Mark White***

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## ***The Power of Influence***

Webster defines the word influence as "the power of persons or things to affect others, seen only in its effects." Though the word influence is only found one time in the King James Version, its meaning is on every page.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells his disciples that they are the "salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13-16). There are many interesting things you can say about this figure of speech. Salt is totally worthless while sitting on a shelf, it has to be applied. Salt can also lose its "saltiness." When it loses its power to flavor, it is good for nothing and must be discarded.

Paul told the brethren at Corinth they were an "epistle of Christ known and read by all men" (2 Cor. 3:1-3). Whether we like it or not, every Christian is an advertisement for Christ. It is rather scary to think the honor of Christ is in the hands of his disciples. Men of the world will judge Christ by the character of his followers.

Have you ever considered what type of an advertisement you are? One of our songs suggests that "We are the only Bible the careless world will read, We are the sinners gospel, we are the scoffers creed, We are the Lord's last message, given in deed and word, What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?"

The majority of worldly people will pay very little attention to what we say, but our actions will always be scrutinized. When they think of our character and reputation, our actions will speak louder than our words.

***- by David Padfield***

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## ***Where the Battle Rages***

One of the reasons why ungodliness prevails so much is because Christians do not want to get involved. More than 450 years ago, Martin Luther wrote: "If I profess with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God, except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and is to be steady on all the battlefield; it is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

***- selected***

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## ***How to Answer When You Don't Know the Answer***

No one likes to be 'put on the spot.' We dread the possibility of being asked questions that we can't answer. This is especially true when the questions are about religion.

Perhaps one of the biggest hindrances to spreading the gospel is this fear of being asked questions. If you feel uneasy about your level of Bible knowledge, you may try to avoid potentially embarrassing situations -- sidestepping any discussion that might turn to religious themes. Unfortunately this keeps us from many 'open doors' for personal evangelism.

Since no one has ALL of the answers, it is important for us to know what to do when questions arise that 'stump' us. Here are some suggestions:

1) Realize -- and be ready to explain -- that there are simply some pieces of information that we do not have because God has not supplied them. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deut. 29:29). But, we have "all truth" (John 16:12, 13), and "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). So, every piece of essential information has been supplied.

2) When you do not know the answer, it is best to simply admit it. This is much better than trying to 'bluff' your way through. Humbly say, "I don't know." But do not fail to add: "I'll find out and get back to you on that." Following this procedure will actually provide additional opportunities to teach. It keeps the door open to further discussions.

3) Study, study, study! You will feel less intimidated and more willing to engage in biblical discussions if you build your confidence level by increasing your Bible knowledge. Pay special attention to areas where you presently feel 'weak' in knowledge and understanding. Be well prepared to deal with popular denominational errors. Be ready to explain 'issues' that divide brethren.

4) Never shy away from a chance to talk about God and His Word. The more you do this, the easier it will become. Every such conversation serves as an opportunity for you to 'sharpen your sword.'

***- by Greg Gwin***